



LIFELINK

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Five Small ACTs to Strengthen Your Mental Health

Promoting mental health involves a combination of strategies supporting psychological, emotional and social well-being. While mental health is often discussed in relation to mental illness, it is defined as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community.” [1] In honor of Mental Health Month (May), try incorporating these five small ACTs into your daily routine:

Practice self-care.

Journal writing is a self-care technique that can help you relieve stress, find meaning during adversity, and process thoughts and emotions in a healthy manner. To build this habit, seek a quiet place and aim to write for a few minutes at the same time each day (set a reminder on your smart phone if you need a nudge). Pick a format that’s most accessible and comfortable for you, such as a notebook or computer. If you’re ready to go but feel a bit of writer’s block coming on, try starting with phrases like “I am most grateful for…” or “I believe in myself because…” to get you going. Our partners at the [Real Warriors Campaign](#) have more tips on [journaling](#) and other [self-care](#) tools, such as practicing mindfulness.

Fuel with nature’s best.

When it comes to optimizing physical or mental health, the benefits of drinking water are a “no-brainer.” Moderate dehydration can elevate cortisol levels (one of the body’s fight or flight hormones) leading to feelings of anxiousness and stress. The [Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System](#) recommends drinking at least 0.5 to one fluid ounce of water per pound of body weight daily to promote physical and mental performance. Pair your H2O with nutritious fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein. Research shows that people with diets high in whole foods have a lower risk of depression than those who consume mostly processed food [2]. For more tips on fueling with your physical and mental health in *mind*, click [here](#).

Maintain a physical fitness regimen that you enjoy.

What can you do to improve your mood, get [better sleep](#), increase endurance, navigate stress, boost energy *and* stay mission (and PFA) ready? Exercise. Physical activity has been proven to do all of the above, in addition to potentially reducing

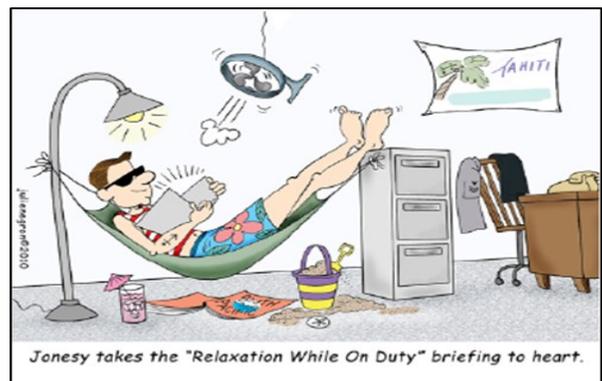
the symptoms of anxiety and depression, and boosting cognitive function [3]. Round up a few shipmates and go for a run around the flight-deck or try a group fitness class on your installation. The objective is to find a physical activity you enjoy that strengthens your body *and* mind! Aim for a minimum of two hours and thirty minutes of moderate physical activity per week, strength training all major muscle groups. Short on time or space? Try this [workout](#).

Have a plan to navigate stress—and put it in ACTION.

A [Stress Navigation Plan](#) can help you identify your physical, emotional and social reactions to stress; note helpful coping strategies; and determine who and where your resources are *before* you need them. Your plan is a reminder that no matter the situation, you don’t have to navigate it alone. Personalize your Stress Navigation Plan today and keep it in a safe, easily accessible place. Key resources such as the [Military Crisis Line](#), [Military OneSource](#) and [Navy Chaplain Care](#) are already populated in the plan for your convenience.

Practice kindness, 1 Small ACT at a time.

Performing a kind act stimulates “emotional warmth,” which promotes release of oxytocin in the brain [4]. Whether you volunteer to be an on-call [designated driver](#) for your shipmates or simply hold the door for someone, you’re contributing to your own feelings of connectedness, purpose and belonging—important contributors to mental health. 1 Small ACT not only makes a difference to others, it makes a difference to *you*.

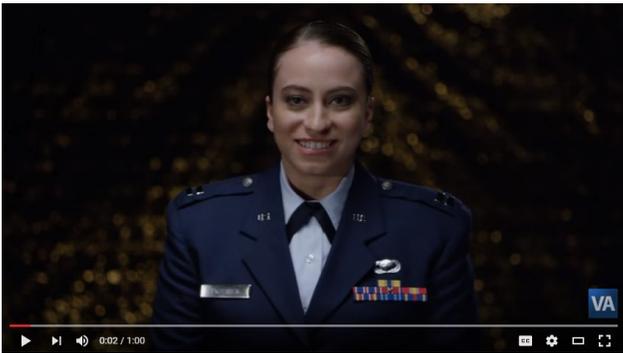


Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more mental health tips!



Lifelink Spotlight

I'm Good—But are You Ready to Listen?



A key principle of the *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign is active communication. Making an effort to ask a shipmate, family member or even a stranger how he or she is doing is 1 Small ACT that can make a difference. Taking the time to actively listen, however, can save a life.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) have recently released a new public service announcement video that builds off of this conversation. “I’m Good—But are You Ready to Listen” sheds light on the responses that may not be voiced when someone navigating persistent stress or psychological health challenges is asked “how are you?” The video features actual service members and veterans revealing risk factors and warning signs—through their underlying feelings, thoughts and emotions—otherwise hidden by a quick and casual “I’m good.” Some unmask their outwardly content disposition with statements about struggling to deal with the past, feeling overwhelmed or having nightmares. Others mention feeling as though no one understands them, that they are alone, that they don’t need any help or that they cannot live like this anymore.

Each statement preceded by “I’m good” is a reminder that every interaction with someone is an opportunity to connect and offer support. A casual “hey, how are you doing” in hurried passing can be a missed opportunity to listen for cues that may indicate how a person feels on the inside, despite how things appear on the outside. Taking the time to ask *and* listen is the true definition of being there for *Every Sailor, Every Day*, and essential to preventing suicide.

Suicide prevention coordinators are encouraged to view this one-minute PSA and share it with their shipmates via social media, plan of the week notes, in-person discussion or other means. It can be accessed on the [Veterans Health Administration’s YouTube page](#).

Resilience Corner

National Prevention Week is May 16th–21st

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration’s (SAMHSA) “National Prevention Week” is right around the corner. This annual public health initiative is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health issues and substance abuse issues through community-centered approaches. While this week is used to promote public awareness and support, National Prevention Week was developed based on the concept that “effective prevention... requires consistent action.” It’s an all hands evolution, all of the time. This is a great opportunity for you, your shipmates and families to tie in the many ways we can come together to support each other and prevent destructive behavior, engaging the theme “Strong as One. Strong Together.” Each day, SAMHSA will highlight a new topic according to the following calendar:

- Monday, May 16: *Prevention of Tobacco Use*
- Tuesday, May 17: *Prevention of Underage Drinking & Alcohol Misuse*
- Wednesday, May 18: *Prevention of Prescription & Opioid Drug Misuse*
- Thursday, May 19: *Prevention of Illicit Drug Use & Youth Marijuana Use*
- Friday, May 20: *Prevention of Suicide*
- Saturday, May 21: *Promotion of Mental Health & Wellness*

Visit SAMHSA online for National Prevention Week engagement ideas. You could organize a health fair supporting the daily topics or promote prevention education on your command’s Facebook page using SAMHSA’s toolkit. Even individual action promotes solidarity.

Navy’s 21st Century Sailor Programs have a myriad of resources to support your local efforts. Visit [Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention](#), [Navy Suicide Prevention](#), and [Navy Operational Stress Control](#) online for downloadable tools and information. For more resources, including [Tobacco Cessation](#) information, visit Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center’s [Health Promotion and Wellness Department](#).



Click the image for *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign information. To order *Navy Suicide Prevention* or *Operational Stress Control* products for your command, click [here](#).

News and Resources

Together We can Increase Knowledge about Mental Health
[Navy Medicine Live](#)

Speak Nicely to Your Kids
[HPRC](#)

Taking the First Step Toward Mental Health
[Health.mil](#)

Deployed Resilience Counselors: Catalysts for Change
[Navy Live](#)

Programs Promote Healthier Lifestyles for Military Youth
[Health.mil](#)

Five Things You Didn't Know about Compassion Fatigue
[Navy Medicine Live](#)

New DoD Mobile App Helps Diffuse Nightmares for Better Sleep
[DCoE](#)

Celebrate Mother's Day
[HPRC](#)

Commanding Officer's Suicide Prevention Program Handbook
[Issuu](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

**Mental Health Month,
National Fitness Month,
Military Family
Appreciation Month**
May

National Prevention Week
(details)
May 15-21

**PTSD Awareness Month,
Men's Health Month**
June

SPC Training Webinars
May 11, 1000 CST
May 26, 1200 CST
[Register Here](#)

6 Apps for Staying Mission Ready

Mobile apps are great tools for helping you manage your psychological health. They can be used to support care or treatment, to connect with others for peer support, and allow you to track and share health information with your health care provider. Try these apps to stay mission ready.



1. Gain peer support with *Real Warriors*

Peer support can lead to a higher quality of life by connecting people who have been through similar situations. The Real Warriors app is an online photo-sharing service that encourages the military community to support their peers. Users can **upload photos to the Wall**, salute others, share photos via social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr), and access 24/7 resources. This app is available for **Apple** devices.

2. Keep calm with *Breathe2Relax*

Staying calm under stress can improve your overall health. The **Breathe2Relax** app can help you keep calm in times of stress. The app includes a series of breathing exercises to try on your own or with professional medical care. This app is available for Apple and Android devices.

3. Track your mood with the *T2 MoodTracker*

Tracking your mood over time can help you see how life's stresses affect your psychological health. The **T2 MoodTracker app** lets you set daily reminders to record your mood and add notes for important events such as starting a new therapy. This app is available for **Apple** and **Android** devices.

4. Strengthen your fitness with *LifeArmor*

It is important to understand your symptoms and learn ways to manage your concerns. The **LifeArmor app** offers self-help tools across 17 topics such as sleep and post-traumatic stress. There are four main resources for each topic including signs and symptoms, self-assessment tools, tips for self-management and videos from members of the military community who have shared their experiences with seeking care. This app is available for **Apple** and **Android** devices.

5. Manage post-trauma symptoms with *PTSD Coach*

Knowing the symptoms that often occur after trauma is an important step in recovery. Understanding and managing those symptoms can decrease stress and improve your psychological health. The **PTSD Coach app** shares information and tools for tracking your symptoms. This app is available for **Apple** and **Android** devices.

6. Soothe yourself with *Virtual Hope Box*

Being able to self-comfort can provide relief from painful emotions. The **Virtual Hope Box app** stores personal, inspirational content that may be helpful in times of need. You can personalize the content and include items such as family photos or reminders of past successes. The app also provides relaxation and **mindfulness** exercises, and inspiring messages and quotes. This app is available for **Apple** and **Android** devices.

Note: Keep in mind that these apps do not replace a trained health care professional. While self-monitoring has positive benefits, it is important to keep your provider informed and seek additional care if needed.

*Navy Suicide Prevention Branch would like to thank our partners at the Real Warriors Campaign for providing this content. Check out more resources on www.realwarriors.net. You may also submit **1 Small ACT photos** through their mobile app, listed above.*